

FEATURE ARTICLE

The Baker Family Playhouse Sam Houston Park



How often would a backyard playhouse survive in Houston for more than 100 years? And, more pointedly, how often would one be moved six times during those years so that it could be saved and enjoyed? The Baker Family Playhouse can claim both of those unlikely scenarios.

The frame playhouse with its turned porch posts was built in 1893 by Captain James A. Baker for his six-year-old daughter, Alice. It was placed in the yard of the Baker family at 1104 San Jacinto Street where it stood for more than ten years. When the Bakers moved to 1417 Main Street in 1904, the playhouse was lifted onto a four-wheeled cart and pulled by horses to the new location. Although Alice Baker was growing up, she had younger sisters and brothers who loved playing in their very own house. In 1918 the beloved playhouse was towed, this time by a Model-T truck, to its new home at 22 Courtlandt Place, where a new Baker generation now lived. Neighborhood children ran in and out of the playhouse for thirteen years until another journey was made in a small moving van. The playhouse was then deposited in the yard at 207 Bremond, an address that adjoined the then-home of Capt. Baker and his wife, Alice. The playhouse came alive with the happy voices and pattering feet of numerous grandchildren. In 1940 the playhouse, now almost fifty years old, traveled to the home of the James A. Baker Jr. family on Bissonnet, where it became a favorite hide-out for more grandchildren. Six years later it was pushed through the hedge from the backyard at 1216 Bissonnet into the backyard at 1213 Berthea for another family to enjoy. In time, all of the children grew up, the property was sold and the playhouse became a cabana for the swimming pool built in the new owner's backyard.

Fast forward to 2010: the owner on Berthea was redeveloping the property and wanted the playhouse moved. A call was made to The Heritage Society which welcomed the historic playhouse to Sam Houston Park. Restored to its original charm, the miniature dwelling will once again attract children. In September a story time for preschoolers will be held every Friday morning. This much loved and well-traveled piece of history can truly be called a survivor! For details on the Friday morning storytelling, contact The Heritage Society at 713-655-1912.

